

**White House Conference on Aging Solutions Forum
March 18, 2005
Richards Treat University Center
Millikin University
Decatur, Illinois**

Welcome and Introductions

Wes Tower, Chairperson of the ECIAAA Corporate Board welcomed the 56 attendees to Millikin University. He recognized and thanked the co-sponsors of the WHCOA Forum including: Millikin University,

The Human Services Agency Consortium,
The United Way of Decatur and Mid-Illinois,
The Macon County Health Department, and
The East Central Illinois Area Agency on Aging

Wes Tower thanked the Illinois Department on Aging and the Long Term Care Ombudsman Program for supporting the Forum. He thanked the Macon County Health Department for coordinating registration. Wes Tower announced that the Forum was designated by the national WHCOA Office as an official WHCOA event. He introduced the keynote speaker Mike O'Donnell, Executive Director of the East Central Illinois Area Agency on Aging.

Keynote Address

Mike O'Donnell presented the keynote address on the theme: "Building a Community for Long Term Living." A copy of the keynote address is attached to this report.

Focus Groups

The attendees proceeded to their assigned Focus Groups to address following issues:

Blue Group: Public Education and Awareness

Red Group: Independence and Autonomy

Green Group: Community Readiness

Process

The facilitators of each group instructed their group participants to identify problems and vote to select their top five problems using a nominal group process technique. Each group was instructed to identify solutions and vote to select their top three solutions for each problem.

After lunch, the Focus Groups reported their solutions in plenary session.

The following is a summary of their reports:

Public Education and Readiness

Problem #1. The need to increase awareness and publicity about aging and community-based services.

Solutions:

1. Provide funding for marketing. Create public-private partnerships to seek resources for marketing, e.g., Chamber of Commerce.
2. Engage college interns in marketing and communication.
3. Government needs to step up.

Problem #2. Demands will be different with Baby Boomers. They will have different expectations than today's seniors. They will not be content with the status quo.

Solutions:

1. Be proactive: make social changes today to prepare for needs in later life. Make your life easier. Be adaptable to change.
2. Get people in the mode of thinking about what they will need in the future. Don't wait until there is a crisis.
3. Increase salaries and provide health care coverage to recruit and retain workers in senior services and assure quality care.

Problem #3. The need to market ourselves, i.e. community-based services.

Solutions:

1. Come together and collaborate, e.g., through the Human Service Agency Consortium.
2. Maximize what we have done best in Decatur and Macon County.
3. Engage service clubs in spreading the word about businesses and community organizations serving seniors and caregivers.

Problem #4 Change the image of aging.

Solutions:

1. Celebrate aging. Show people on the "elder side" doing vital things. Promote role modeling of positive aging.
2. Promote respect for elders among young people in our schools
3. Promote intergenerational activities which bring young people and elders together.

Problem #5. The need to know where to call for help.

Solutions:

1. Establish and sustain a community awareness campaign. Seniorama is a one-day event which attracts 1,500 people. We need a sustained awareness campaign year round. Sustain awareness and consumer education via internet, TV, radio, and newspapers.
2. Educate the older persons and boomers about "First Call for Help" operated by the United Way of Decatur and Mid-Illinois.
3. Stay on top of change.

Independence and Autonomy

Problem #1: The need for more education about options available.

Solutions:

1. More public education through the media, with "pizzaz." Reach and teach younger people.
2. Increase marketing to reach target populations, e.g., Aging & Disabilities Resource Center
3. Increase education and marketing efforts to seniors and families in rural communities.
4. Engage key professionals in educational efforts, health care professionals, elder law attorneys, etc.

Problem #2: The need for funding for programs and services.

Solutions:

1. Preserve Social Security and Medicare.
2. Enact legislation to protect volunteers from liability in transporting older persons for out-patient medical care.
3. Increase community ownership, i.e., more accountability of service providers to the community
4. Increase communications with congregations about the funding needs of community-based services for seniors.
5. Change federal and state laws to allow service providers to co-mingle funds from a variety of sources to expand and improve services to older persons and their families.

Problem #3: The need for a continuum of care.

Solutions:

1. Increase integration of social services throughout the community.
2. Increase preventative services for seniors through more education and funding.
3. Develop and implement a comprehensive assessment instrument for all senior services.

Problem #4: The need to improve and expand transportation and housing options.

Solutions:

1. Decrease liability for volunteers transporting seniors and persons with disabilities to access health care services. Apply the Good Samaritan principle through legislation.
2. Use private non-senior agencies to create a network for home repair and home modification. Engage organized labor and youth organizations in home repair projects.
3. Expand public transportation to residents of rural Macon County.
4. Increase the availability of housing options for older adults and persons with disabilities.
5. Create a comprehensive package of housing options from home modifications to admission to a long term care facility.

Problem #5: Isolation and loneliness among older adults in the community.

Solutions:

1. Increase volunteer base
2. Provide friendly visiting, companionship, etc., through natural helping networks such as neighborhoods, congregations, etc.
3. Support and expand parish nurse programs through partnerships with congregations and health care providers.

Problem #6: Limited capacity of the Aging Network.

Solutions:

1. Establish formal links and consortiums with community programs on aging and organizations representing health care and legal professionals, e.g., the AMA, ABA, local medical societies, and bar associations.
2. Increase support for residents of rural communities and learn more about the resources they have available.
3. Provide mobile services to residents of rural communities.

4. Plan ahead for a new and improved Seniorama next year involving all community agencies. Survey the public on what they want to know about senior services.

Community Readiness

Problem #1: Assessing needs and collecting data.

Solutions:

1. Form a senior coalition to gather information from assessments conducted by a variety of sources, e.g., the Coalition for Productive Senior Living.
2. Collect and analyze data and prioritize needs.

Problem #2: Where do we start? (me, you, the community, the client)

Solutions:

1. Establish and implement the Aging & Disability Resource Center.
2. Establish a website for the ADRC.
3. Link the ADRC website to the data base of human services maintained by First Call for Help.
4. Promote "Third Age" educational courses through the schools and Richland Community College to help citizens to become "aging ready for their own third age."
5. Identify and educate key individuals in the community who will serve as aging advisers in the workplace, in schools, etc.

Problem #3: Marketing - How do we reach the whole county?

Solutions:

1. Market to the whole community.
2. Sustain a marketing plan.
3. Ensure that other agencies are educated.

Problem #4: More federal funding is going to institutions than communities.

Solutions:

1. Channel more federal funding under Medicare and Medicaid to community-based services.
2. Demonstrate what services are needed to help older persons and persons with disabilities to live independently through the implementation of the Aging & Disability Resource Center.
3. Ensure that grass-roots information gets to Washington, D.C.

Problem #5: Are funds being used effectively?

Solutions:

1. Provide a holistic system of services, i.e., address all domains of a person's or family's life, e.g., economic, social, physical health, behavioral health, housing, etc.
2. Enable individuals and families to access the system via a single/coordinated point of entry.
3. Provide wrap-around plans which draw upon a variety of resources to build the capacity of individuals and families.

Problem #6: Labor Force issues.

Solutions:

1. Increase payments for home and community-based services.
2. Increase wages and benefits for workers providing home and community-based services.
3. Create career ladders and paths for home care workers.
4. Ensure equity in payment rates across systems providing services for older adults and persons with disabilities.

The ECIAAA distributed evaluation forms to the attendees.

Mike O'Donnell thanked the attendees for their participation and announced that a summary report of the proceedings would be submitted to the WHCOA Office in thirty days. Copies of the report will be sent to all attendees.

The WHCOA Forum was adjourned at 2:00 p.m.